

**Testimony of Cynthia L. Wolken, Esq.
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Marijuana Laws (MT-NORML)**

**On House Bill 391
Before the House Local Government Committee of the
Montana State House of Representatives
February 17, 2011**

Please allow me to read the testimony of John Masterson:

Good afternoon. My name is John Masterson and I strongly oppose HB 391 and the underlying principles on which this legislation is based. I am the Chairman of the Board of Directors of MT-NORML. We advocate for the legalization of adult cannabis use, with reasonable restrictions, and with a comprehensive system of taxation and regulation.

I have been involved in cannabis-related initiatives and policy issues in Montana for years. I was involved in Missoula County's Initiative 2, passed in 2006, that made marijuana the lowest priority of law enforcement. Initiative 2 created a Community Oversight Committee to help oversee implementation. I am the Chair of the Committee, which has widespread community buy-in and support.

Initiative 2 passed with the overwhelming support of the citizens on Missoula County. It is puzzling that Mr. Van Valkenburg – an official elected by the people of Missoula County – is doing everything in his power to circumvent and overturn the will of the people. It is telling that not one of the legislative delegates in Missoula County is sponsoring this bill. Mr. Van Valkenburg had to find a legislator from Roundup to carry this legislation for him. Despite his best efforts, Mr. Van Valkenburg was unable to find a sponsor for his bill last session. Does it sound like this bill is the will of the people? This is an insult to the people of Missoula County and to the concept of representative democracy.

This legislation is also a slap in the face to local government and local control – something this committee often touts. The people of Missoula County do not want their taxpayer dollars spent investigating, prosecuting, and incarcerating misdemeanor possession of marijuana cases. It is my understanding that local taxpayer rights is something this committee also vehemently supports. Despite his protestations to the contrary, it is clear that Mr. Van Valkenburg abhors citizen use of cannabis – for medical purposes or otherwise. I would urge Mr. Van Valkenburg to run for the legislature again on this issue – and let the people of Missoula County decide whether to elect him on this platform.

For the above reasons, I respectfully request a no-vote on HB 391. I regret that I am not able to be here to answer questions, but am happy to be contacted by committee members seeking further clarification or insight on this legislation.